

Dan Knodl: Governor's vetoes hurt middle-class families

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The Wisconsin governor arguably has the most powerful line item veto pen in the country. The creatively egregious ways governors have used this veto pen to manipulate budgets have become a legend in their own right. For example, the “Frankenstein Veto” once allowed the governor to create new sentences by combining parts of unrelated sentences. This was how Governor Jim Doyle was able to raid \$427 million from the transportation fund to plug a hole in the 2005 budget. There was also the “Vanna White Veto” which once allowed governors to strike individual letters within words to create new words. The people of Wisconsin have since outlawed both of these tactics via constitutional amendment.

The governor still has the ability to eliminate individual provisions in the budget and to reduce appropriations. Governor Evers has embraced his powerful veto powers to issue 51 separate line-item vetoes in the current budget.

The vetoes related to tax cuts stand to cause the most harm. The budget that passed the legislature included a \$3.5 billion income tax cut, which the governor reduced to a mere \$175 million. Only taxes paid on income under \$27,000 (single filers) or \$36,000 (married filers) will see a reduction. The governor effectively eliminated any real middle class tax relief. He also eliminated tax relief for the 95% of Wisconsin small businesses that pay taxes at the individual rate—two-thirds of which fall into the top bracket.

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Even more exasperating was the governor's extremely creative use of his veto

powers to trigger long-term property tax increases. By using his pen to change “2023–24 school year and the 2024–25” to read “2023-2425,” the governor changed a one-time increase in the levy limit for schools to a recurring four-century long annual increase in property taxes.

On a more local note, the budget would have provided the resources to begin the consolidation of UWM-Washington County and Moraine Park Technical College. This consolidation will provide a model for other struggling two-year campuses across the state. The governor struck this provision and set the entire process back as a result.

Finally, in a veto affecting nearly every town in Wisconsin, the governor also removed an increase to mileage aid payments. The result will be a \$10 million cut to funding for local roads.

With the governor’s vetoes, the state will still be sitting on over \$4 billion dollars that should be returned to the taxpayers of Wisconsin because the government took in more money than it needed. Constituents in my district will spend this surplus far more effectively and efficiently than Madison bureaucrats. For the remainder of the legislative session, I will advocate for another tax plan to offer relief to all citizens. The state economy is growing and the responsible thing to do is to return the surplus to those that earned it – the taxpayers.

-Knodl, R-Germantown, represents the 8th Senate District.